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PROTECTION AND SECURITY OF SMALL STATES

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The item "Protection and security of small States" was included in the agenda of the General Assembly at its forty-fourth session, in 1989, at the request of Maldives and considered at that session and again in 1991.

2. At those sessions, the General Assembly adopted resolutions 44/51 of 8 December 1989 and 46/43 of 9 December 1991, respectively, in which it, inter alia, invited the Secretary-General to explore ways and means, within the United Nations and in accordance with the Charter, of preserving the security of small States; to hold consultations with the members of the Security Council and interested Governments; and to submit a report to the Assembly at its forty-sixth and forty-ninth sessions, respectively. In its resolution 46/43, the Assembly also stressed the importance of strengthening regional security arrangements by increasing interaction, cooperation and consultation.

3. Pursuant to those resolutions, the Secretary-General solicited the views of the members of the Security Council on the subject and requested the observations and suggestions of all Member States. Those views are reflected in the report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly at its forty-sixth session (A/46/339) and in the present report.

II. VIEWS EXPRESSED BY STATES AND MEMBERS OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

4. During the debate on the item at the forty-sixth session, all speakers indicated that they attached importance to the issue of the security of small States because of their inherent vulnerability to external threats and interference. All speakers further agreed that the security of small States would best be safeguarded through increasing the efficiency of the existing United Nations bodies responsible for maintaining international peace and security. Some speakers considered that enhancing the preventive capabilities of the Security Council and the United Nations as a whole would make it possible to avert conflicts at their initial stages and that the office of the Secretary-General could play an expanded preventive role within the framework of Article 99 of the Charter. The representatives of the European Community and the United States of America stressed that they would not agree to making any distinction among States with regard to their security, maintaining that this was unnecessary since the United Nations was based on the principle of the sovereign equality of States and provided for the security of all.

5. In his report to the General Assembly at its forty-sixth session (A/46/339), the Secretary-General said that on the basis of replies received from Member States and as a result of consultations with members of the Security Council it appeared that, although there were differing opinions on the question of how best to safeguard the security of small States, it was generally agreed that, because of their intrinsic characteristics, small States had a limited capacity to provide for their own security and might need a special measure of attention and support.

6. It was also agreed that as the international order could be undermined by the instability or lack of security of small States, safeguarding their security was in the general interest. This could be furthered by creating an environment of support and protection for small States, an area in which the United Nations might take the lead by providing a security structure that built on arrangements that already existed under the international collective security system envisaged in the Charter.

7. There was general agreement that the unconditional respect by all States of the principle of sovereignty and territorial integrity as well as the other principles of the Charter and rules of international law was at the core of international security guarantees for all States and that security arrangements for small States should involve establishing supporting arrangements at the regional and subregional level.

III. OBSERVATIONS

8. On the basis of replies received from Governments and consultations, the Secretary-General considers that the creation of a climate of support that could serve as a basis for protecting the security of small States is widely viewed as being of paramount importance. In that context, the Secretary-General would like to draw attention to the guidelines for appropriate types of confidence-building measures 1/ endorsed by the General Assembly at its forty-third session (resolution 43/78 H of 7 December 1988), the ultimate goal of which is to strengthen international peace and security and to contribute to the prevention of all wars.

9. As noted at the beginning of the guidelines (1.2.4), the potential of confidence-building measures to contribute significantly to the enhancement of peace and security was already being explored in some regions and subregions where the States concerned were joining forces to contribute, by the elaboration and implementation of confidence-building measures, to more stable relations and greater security, as well as the elimination of outside intervention and enhanced cooperation in their areas.

10. The guidelines foresaw (2.5.4.7) a significant role for the United Nations in building confidence. It was noted in particular that the General Assembly and the Security Council could further the process by adopting decisions and recommendations containing suggestions and requests to States, while the Secretary-General, in accordance with the Charter, could, among other things, provide his good offices, particularly in times of crisis, in promoting the establishment of confidence-building procedures.

11. In pursuance of the mission of building confidence, the United Nations encourages the pursuit of regional solutions to regional problems, including the organization of regional conferences, meetings and seminars to foster the sharing of ideas and information between governmental and non-governmental sectors, as well as between governmental and other experts. There have been 10 seminars on regional and subregional confidence- and security-building measures and two seminars on confidence- and security-building measures in the maritime environment in the course of which the issue of enhanced security for

States was discussed in both the military and non-military context. In the military context, among the measures discussed were some intended, inter alia, to reduce the dangers of armed conflict as a result of miscalculation and/or misunderstanding of military activities or dispositions. In the non-military context, measures discussed related to trans-border cooperation in areas such as joint management of water, fisheries or other natural resources of vital importance to the economic security of the States concerned and other forms of regional or subregional cooperation to enhance the economic viability and development of States in the region.

12. In 1993, regional seminars related to confidence-building were convened in Italy, Japan, Austria and Ukraine.

Notes

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifteenth Special Session, Supplement No. 3 (A/S-15/3) para. 41 (para. 6 of the quoted text).

ANNEX

Replies received from Governments

DJIBOUTI

[Original: French]

[19 June 1992]

1. "Protection and security of small States" is the subject of General Assembly resolution 46/43. The Government of Djibouti is pleased that the resolution, of which it was a sponsor, was adopted without a vote.

2. In the resolution, the General Assembly recognizes that small States may be particularly vulnerable to external threats and acts of interference in their internal affairs and deems it necessary that their protection and security be guaranteed in all circumstances.

3. The Republic of Djibouti draws the attention of the United Nations and the international community to the need to assist small States, which are at the mercy of groups of mercenaries and terrorists with access to sophisticated weapons and a powerful network of relations thanks to considerable financial resources furnished by other countries.

4. The most appropriate means of guaranteeing the integrity and sovereignty of small States continues to be the collective security system of the United Nations provided for in Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, which grants the Security Council the authority to respond to acts of aggression.

ECUADOR

[Original: Spanish]

[10 July 1992]

1. Having got beyond the bipolar structure in international relations, it is necessary to consider the vital role that the United Nations must play in the context of the so-called "new international order", in the tasks relating to the maintenance of international peace and security. The exercise of that potential authority by the United Nations must be consistent with the peaceful solution of disputes and the system of collective security.

2. While recognizing that the general frame of reference of the "new international order" is in the process of being created, Ecuador ventures to suggest that the rules that will be determined must not impair the sovereignty of States. Any measure that the United Nations takes, as a result, must, as a

general rule, be in response to a specific request from the State concerned, for unless the latter's consent is taken into account, the State's security could be jeopardized, which would add a new factor of vulnerability, particularly in the case of small States.

3. For the above reasons, strict, unqualified and unconditional observance of all the principles of international law by all States will be a guarantee of security for small States.

4. The strengthening of regional and subregional security systems, known as existing arrangements in the framework of universal security, is, without a doubt, a further guarantee. Moreover, regional and subregional security systems must serve to limit the exercise of the authority emanating from the "new international order".

5. Finally, the international community must emphasize the tasks directed at peace-keeping and strengthening of the capacity for action of each and every competent organ of the United Nations, in order to forestall, anticipate and prevent the emergence or worsening of situations that might endanger international peace and security, in matters relating to what is called "preventive diplomacy".

MALDIVES

[Original: English]

[14 December 1992]

1. The Government of the Republic of Maldives is pleased to note the due attention and importance afforded to the item entitled "Protection and security of small States" by the international community. This was clearly demonstrated when the General Assembly adopted, without a vote, resolutions 44/51 and 46/43. A total of 55 States joined Maldives in sponsoring resolution 44/51 at the forty-fourth session, in 1989. The increased awareness of the international community to the issue was confirmed during the forty-sixth session, when 64 Member States joined Maldives in presenting a resolution under the item.

2. The Republic of Maldives, deeply committed to the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and with a strong tradition of respect for the sovereign rights of other nations and of principled responsibility in international affairs, is firmly committed to finding ways and means of preserving, protecting and enhancing the security of small States in accordance with the Charter.

3. The Republic of Maldives, like many other small States, was subjected to an armed aggression by a group of mercenaries in 1988 and is fully aware of the inherent vulnerability of small States to external threats and acts of interference in their internal affairs and the special needs they have consonant with the right to sovereignty and territorial integrity. The attempted invasion was aimed at overthrowing the legitimate Government and the installation of a puppet-regime in order to purchase arms, establish training camps and launch

terrorist attacks on other countries in the region. Thus, had the attempt succeeded, it would have challenged not only the security of the country but that of the region and international peace and security as a whole.

4. Events in the international arena, since the issue was first included in the agenda of the General Assembly, have further highlighted its relevance in efforts to maintain international peace and security.

5. The Government of Maldives continues to believe that protection and security of small States should be viewed as a multifaceted concept encompassing such factors as military, economic, social and environmental security.

6. In terms of military security, it is worth noting that threats facing small States emanate not only from other States and government forces. Small States are equally susceptible to acts of aggression from mercenaries in the pay of externally based groups or for that matter by terrorists, including drug traffickers.

7. While the Charter of the United Nations recognizes the inherent right of all States to self-defence, only a privileged few possess the unilateral ability to provide for their own security. Lacking adequate financial resources for the acquisition of military hardware and equipment, and facing severe constraints in manpower, small States are never in a position to cater suitably for their security needs. Any attempt by small States to build up their military capabilities to a level of even near self-reliance would be no more than an exercise in futility, severely eroding their means to address vital issues of socio-economic development.

8. The Government of Maldives believes that the best guarantee for the security of small States lies in the Charter of the United Nations, which recognizes the concept of collective security. Specifically, Chapter VII of the Charter outlines those arrangements and entrusts the Security Council with the responsibility of making recommendations and decisions on what measures shall be taken, in accordance with Articles 41 and 42, to maintain or restore international peace and security.

9. However, it is regrettable that for much of the existence of the United Nations this machinery has remained ineffective, mainly because of the cold war. The swift and determined action of the Security Council in the Persian Gulf crisis was an encouraging development worth commending. The performance of the Security Council during that very critical time should give hope to a number of small States. However, not yet forthcoming is one of the most important principles on which the small States could base their trust in the collective security system of the Security Council. That principle is the consistent implementation of all Security Council resolutions without exception.

10. The Charter also recognizes the right of collective security under regional arrangements. Regional arrangements have proved to be quite successful in many parts of the world. However, in the case of small States the question of balance of power in that particular region and the possibility of ultimate dependency of the smaller partners of the arrangement on a single powerful State

may be raised. In the case of bilateral security arrangements, the gravity of this question is much more acute.

11. The only way to overcome these serious doubts would be to have such arrangements based totally on unqualified support by all members of regional security arrangements to the noble objectives and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Even in regions where such arrangements are yet not possible, increased interaction, cooperation and consultation to promote confidence-building measures among the States may help in soothing the fears of the smaller members of that particular region.

12. Attacks on small States do not always come from other States. Quite often their security is threatened by international criminal or illegal organizations and groups such as mercenaries, terrorists, drug traffickers or other adventurists. What may be considered minor irritants to the larger States loom large for the small States.

13. It would be only through increased cooperation, coordination, consultation and exchange of information by the international community about the activities of those groups that such attacks could be prevented. The international community needs to send a unified and unambiguous message to those groups that their activities will not be tolerated by any Member State and that they would not be able to take refuge in any country and will be severely punished.

14. The adoption of the International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries (resolution 44/34, annex) by the General Assembly was a welcome development. However, it is regrettable that so far only 16 States have signed and of those only 5 small States, including the Republic of Maldives, have ratified the Convention to date. It is quite evident that without the participation of the larger and more powerful States in this effort the desired goals of the Convention will never be achieved. The failure of the international community speedily to implement the Convention encourages mercenary groups to continue their heinous activities without fear of being challenged.

15. There have been regional agreements on terrorism. However, at the international level a convention has not yet been possible. It is of the utmost importance and urgency to deal with the issue in a comprehensive manner in order to combat the scourge of terrorism, the vicious ventures of which have often victimized many small States and plagued the world in the post-war period.

16. It is indeed heartening to note that the record on international cooperation against drug trafficking is more encouraging. The 1988 United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, a/ the Global Programme of Action adopted by the special session of the General Assembly on drugs in 1990 (resolution S-17/2, annex) and the declaration of the United Nations Decade Against Drug Abuse, 1991-2000, are examples of a global consensus in the fight against drug trafficking.

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a/ E/CONF.82/15 and Corr.2.

17. The rapid proliferation and easy availability of arms have been a major factor contributing to the activities of international criminal or illegal groups such as mercenaries, terrorists or drug traffickers. The international community should view with grave concern the ultimate destination of the numerous arms supplied to warring factions in conflict areas as those conflicts move towards resolution. Even a cursory glance at the present international situation makes evident the rationale for this observation.

18. When peace agreements are negotiated in areas of conflict, the surrender of all arms to the United Nations and the destruction of weapons of mass destruction in such areas under United Nations supervision should be mandatory. This would prevent the weapons from being transferred to other areas of conflict or to groups such as mercenaries, terrorists and/or narco-terrorists.

19. The establishment of the International Arms Register at the United Nations is also a positive development. It can be fairly viewed as a first step in the efforts to establish a regime of transparency in armaments. However, the scope of the Register should be expanded by the addition of further categories of equipment and the inclusion of data on military holdings and procurement through national production.

20. The damage to the economic infrastructure and the social fabric of small States does not merely depend on the success or the failure of an attack on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of that State. Small States are usually endowed with few resources and their economies are based on two or three primary products. Thus, even a minor disruption such as an attempted mercenary or terrorist attack could have dire consequences for their economies.

21. Evidently, prevention of such activities remains one of the more desirable ways in which to address the issue. This could only be achieved through the assistance and cooperation of the larger and more resource-abundant States of the international community. In that connection, small States deserve assistance in strengthening their institutions and building manpower required to prevent occurrences of such activities.

22. While small States need to possess a degree of military capability, when confronted with any outside threat their first line of defence will always have to be diplomacy. However, lack of available funds prevents many small States from participating effectively in the international forums. Special attention needs to be given to increase the visibility of small States in the international forums. The international community may also consider providing small States with the appropriate assistance in building their manpower in order to enable those countries to participate more fully in the international arena.

23. The Government of Maldives firmly believes that the international community needs to be made more aware of the peculiar problems faced by small States in their efforts to develop as peace-loving, responsible members of the international community. It is only through this awareness that the larger and more resource-rich States could realize the plight of the smaller and weaker members of the family. Small States, once again owing to the lack of resources, have not been able to conduct appropriate public diplomacy campaigns internationally to this end. The United Nations may consider assisting small

States in this regard, through seminars, workshops and publications highlighting the special needs of small States.

24. The report of the Secretary-General of June 1992 entitled "An Agenda for Peace" (A/47/277-S/24111) contains important and insightful observations for the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security in the emerging new international order. Quite rightly, the Secretary-General has emphasized the importance of addressing the issue of security in an integrated and comprehensive manner. The Government of Maldives believes that the recommendations contained in the report with regard to preventive diplomacy, peace-keeping, peacemaking and post-conflict peace-building measures would also enhance the security of small States.

25. For small States, threats to whom arise often from non-State sources, preventive diplomacy offers a more realistic and effective approach for their protection and security. This would be an approach less costly in terms of lives and finance. The Secretary-General should fully utilize the powers entrusted to him under Article 99 of the Charter to draw the attention of the Security Council to any matter that in his opinion may threaten international peace and security. In this connection, the United Nations should improve its information-gathering capabilities and increase its use of fact-finding missions.

26. Experience has demonstrated time and again the swiftness and brutality with which an aggressor takes control of a small State. Failure to respond effectively and immediately by the international community allows the aggressor to consolidate his illegal occupation and project it as a fait accompli. Hence, it is the immediate and determined action of the international community that is required in such events.

27. The Secretary-General in his report has drawn the attention of Member States to the provisions in the Charter on the enforcement measures the Security Council may take in the protection of international peace and security. His call for the ready availability of armed forces on call deserves serious consideration. While forces available may perhaps never be large or well enough equipped to deal with a threat from a major army provided with sophisticated weapons, as observed by the Secretary-General, they would be useful in meeting any threat posed by a military force of a lesser order. Thus it could be quickly and effectively utilized to reverse a situation in which a small State may have been subjected to aggression. Furthermore, the existence of such an arrangement within the umbrella of the United Nations will act as a deterrent to potential aggressors.

28. The Government of Maldives would also like to take this opportunity to convey to the Secretary-General its deep gratitude and sincere appreciation for his tireless and dedicated efforts for the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security.

NAMIBIA

[Original: English]

[17 July 1992]

1. The Government of the Republic of Namibia considers the protection and security of small States as imperative in the present circumstances and reiterates its unconditional support for the Secretary-General of the United Nations to explore ways and means within the United Nations system and in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations of preserving the security of small States.

2. The Government of the Republic of Namibia reiterates its support for the principle of State sovereignty and integrity and holds firmly that each people has an inalienable right to security, free of interference or intervention in its internal affairs.

3. The Government of the Republic of Namibia urges the Secretary-General of the United Nations to continue the consultation with members of the Security Council and other interested Governments, taking into account the changing international climate and emergence of States.

NEW ZEALAND

[Original: English]

[29 August 1994]

1. Resolution 46/43 of 9 December 1991, of which New Zealand was a sponsor, endorsed the Secretary-General's report on the protection and security of small States (A/46/339), which included the recommendations of the workshop held in the Maldives in May 1991. New Zealand found common ground with many of those recommendations, particularly the conclusions on the need to enhance the effectiveness of the Security Council, on regional security and on the importance of helping to build national resilience.

2. At San Francisco in 1945 New Zealand gave a firm commitment to the principle of collective security, which is fundamental to the security of small States. With the era of confrontation between two super-Power blocs now in the past, that principle has taken on a new relevance. The Security Council Summit of January 1992 reaffirmed its commitment to collective security; and the Secretary-General's "An Agenda for Peace" (A/47/277-S/24111) outlined collective approaches towards securing peace in the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations.

3. As the United Nations in its fiftieth year considers the implications of the changing international climate and the emergence of new States, it seems to New Zealand highly appropriate that measures needed to enhance the protection and security of small States are accorded due priority.

4. The fact that small States put their faith in the United Nations as the ultimate guarantor of their security gives them a keen interest in participating actively in the work of the Organization. By extension they place considerable store by the principle of equitable representation in the various organs of the United Nations in order that their concerns and special perspectives may be kept before their fellow members.

5. This is a matter worth reflecting upon at a time when the challenges of the evolving world order are impinging closely on the shape of the Organization and how it manages its business. The equality of members regardless of their respective sizes, wealth or military power is a basic premise of the United Nations Organization and is stated clearly in Article 2 of the Charter. The corollary is that the organs of the United Nations must be seen to be committed to the concerns of Member States, regardless of size.

6. In this connection the Security Council has primary responsibility for providing the reassurances small States seek from the United Nations under Chapters VI and VII of the Charter. The United Nations ability to respond promptly and effectively to calls to restore democracy or prevent humanitarian crises is becoming a litmus test of the Organization's credibility.

7. All Member States must be able to count on the United Nations responding to the problems of small and distant countries as well as those of strategic significance.

8. We live in an ever more interdependent world. The Security Council's decisions are binding on every Member State and have financial implications for all. It is thus essential that the basis for those decisions be understood by the wider United Nations membership.

9. Small States have a particular need for transparency and accountability in the Council's decision-making. Such countries, who make up the majority of the United Nations membership, therefore have a keen interest and role to play in the current deliberations on reform of the Council's procedures and membership.

10. "An Agenda for Peace", endorsed by the international community, acknowledged the multifaceted nature of security. While the threat of military attack or internal armed conflict is a reality for some small States, other forms of threat are of greater concern to most. For example, the activities of drug traffickers and other transnational criminals can seriously harm fragile economies and societies.

11. Similarly, the environmentally unsafe practices of other countries can be extremely detrimental, whether it be drift-net fishing, the use of ozone-depleting chemicals or emissions of greenhouse gases causing possible rises in ocean levels. The United Nations is playing a vital role in helping protect small States from such practices, in particular through its sponsorship of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. It is important that the United Nations system follow up positively the decisions of that Conference, especially those enunciated in the Programme of Action.

12. Also at the international level, meetings such as the Global Conference, the Fourth World Conference on Women, the World Summit for Social Development, and the International Conference on Population and Development are part of the process of addressing sustainable security, for small nations, as well as the most populous.

13. While the United Nations provides international assurances of small State security, New Zealand believes strongly that their security can also be greatly enhanced by effective regional cooperation.

14. In New Zealand's own region, the South Pacific Forum and associated organizations have played a valuable role in this respect for over 20 years. There is close coordination and mutual assistance across a wide range of issues affecting the security, in the broad sense, of individual members. Exchanges of views among them on issues such as law enforcement, economic and political cooperation and resource management, all of which relate to security in its comprehensive sense, are well established.

15. There is ongoing cooperation on anti-terrorist and other law-enforcement matters. The decision, at this year's Forum, to apply for observer status in the United Nations General Assembly will enable more effective cooperation between such regional initiatives and international ones.

16. The security of small States is not only subject to external threats. Indeed the starting point for the security for any State is its own well-being, from which springs national resilience. Perhaps the greatest underlying vulnerability facing most small States is their own lack of economic development. Their often very narrow resource bases will sometimes preclude the economic diversification and degree of long-term self-sufficiency to which larger developing countries can aspire. This handicap impairs the achievement of the socio-economic well-being and political stability that constitutes national resilience.

17. There are various ways the international community can help small States overcome this handicap. One way is to pay attention to the special needs of smaller States in establishing criteria for the provision of development assistance.

18. Another, more far-sighted approach is to make sure that the international trading system serves the needs of small, primarily developing countries. The GATT Uruguay Round did this by directly addressing issues such as agricultural trade reform, restrictions in developed countries on textiles and clothing exports, and tariff escalation against value-added exports.

19. Continued progress to open up new and improved markets for developing countries' exports will help build economic and political stability. In this regard there is an ongoing role for the United Nations and its agencies in assisting small and developing States to identify specific opportunities arising from the Round.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

[Original: English]

[19 June 1992]

The note of the Secretary-General dated 26 May 1992 (SCPC/6/92/1) transmitting the text of General Assembly resolution 46/43 of 9 December 1991, which was adopted under the agenda item entitled "Protection and security of small States", has been duly noted and transmitted to the relevant authorities in Papua New Guinea for their appropriate consideration.

URUGUAY

[Original: Spanish]

[20 November 1992]

1. In the view of Uruguay, the text of resolution 46/43, like earlier drafts, suffers from the drawback of the lack of a definition of "small States", thereby making it difficult to determine whether or not some States belong in that category.

2. Nevertheless, an appreciable improvement can be noted over the earlier drafts, in that the fifth preambular paragraph refers to terrorists and drug traffickers as well as to mercenaries. Uruguay approves of this expansion, bearing in mind that it harmonizes with solutions adopted in other fields.

3. The wording of paragraph 3 has also been improved inasmuch as it states the importance for all States of the unconditional respect of all the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, expressly mentioning sovereign equality, territorial integrity, non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries and the peaceful settlement of disputes. Uruguay considers that in general terms the resolution fulfils its intended purpose, but it shares the position of those States which would like a precise definition of "small States".